

Post – Independence era in Odisha witnessed various measures undertaken by Government of Odisha for the educational developments for all in general and Scheduled tribes and Scheduled castes in particular. Accordingly, it prepared a report of existing educational institutions starting from lower primary level to Higher Secondary education collecting educational data of boys and girls year wise. On the basis of this Report, it chalked out plans and programmes to be implemented for the development of education. From the Annual Report of the Government of Odisha, it was found that in the early decades of independence era, women education did not

have also been formulated and implemented for the spread of girl's education. A special department, namely the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department has been set up to look after the Welfare of Tribal people. Since they are both economically and educationally backward, the students belonging to Scheduled Castes(SC) and Scheduled Tribes(ST) are exempted from payment of tuition fees in all types of educational institutions. Over and above this concession, the poor and deserving students receive stipends and lump sum grants from the Government from the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department and the

Educating Tribal Girls in Odisha : A Search on Their Apathy

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receive proper weightage inspite of government's measures which was expediated later on.

The present paper aims at examining the educational status of tribal girls of Odisha. Despite the sincere and concerted efforts by the government for the overall development of scheduled tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard parameters of development. They are not participating in the process of development as they are not aware of most of the programmes and policies made for their upliftment.¹ Several commissions and committees have been appointed and several policies and programmes

pupils of Primary Schools are supplied with reading and writing materials².

The schemes and programmes that have either been completed in the recent past or are still continuing, could be divided into two groups. Such as (A) General Schemes and Programmes and (B) Gender Specific Schemes and programmes² the description of which is given below:

- (A) General Schemes and programmes.
 - i) Non-Formal Education (NFE)

Non-formal Education is a alternative to the formal system which has the potentiality of becoming the major programme of education for girls who cannot attend school during normal school hours due to various reasons³.

ii) Operation Black Board (1987)

Operation Blackboard centrally sponsored programme which was started in 1987 immediately after the declaration of Rajiv Gandhi National Policy on Education of 1986.

iii) National Literacy Mission (NLM)

The National Literacy Mission is a nationwide programme started by Government of India in 1988.

iv) District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

This programme was initiated in 1994 and the prime objective of this was to provide all children with access to primary education within the formal system or through the informal education programme like NFE that was initiated during 1979-80.

v) National Programme of Nutritional support for primary Education.

National Programme of Nutritional Support for Primary Education, which is otherwise popularly known as Mid-Day- Meals Scheme was initiated in the year of 1995.

vi) Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE)

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) system which was introduced in 1977-78 was revised and renamed as the Educational

Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) in 2000.

vii) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which was launched towards the end of Ninth Five Year Plan period, is considered as a flagship programme for achieving the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) for all children in the age group of 6-14⁴.

(B) Gender specific schemes / programmes

i) Mahila Samakhya

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) is residential upper primary schools for girls from SC, ST, OBC and Muslim communities.

ii) National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)

Some of the important schemes and programmes of the Union Government and that of the state of Odisha are mentioned below.

(i) Construction of Educational Institutions:

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provide financial assistance to construct different categories of educational institutions in tribal areas. Odisha has a total number of 1031 Sevashrams and 143 Residential Sevashrams, 112 Ashram Schools, 91 Girls High Schools, 115 High Schools, 8 Higher Secondary Schools and 10 model residential schools named as Ekalabya Model Residential Schools (EMRS).

(ii) Establishment of Girls and other Hostels. In order to facilitate education among the ST girls, the scheme of establishment of girls hostel is in operation in the country since the Third Five year plan period.

(iii) Distribution of Bi-cycles to ST Girl students of Scheduled Areas

During the financial year of 2006-07, a total number of 3678 ST girls have been provided with bicycles who have passed HSC examination and continuing their studies at college level and in the current financial year (2007-08), there has been a provision to provide bicycles to these students amounting to Rs.81.00 lakh

(iv) Cash Award Scheme for Best ST students and Educational Institutions.

This scheme is in operation in the state of Odisha since 1987 with a view to create competition spirit among the ST students and educational institutions running under the ST and SC Development Department.

(v) Introduction of Teaching in Tribal languages –

The Union Government has sanctioned the proposal of teaching in tribal language and the state government has recently introduced teaching in 10 major tribal languages, that is in Santali, Saora, Munda, Bonda, Kui, Kuvi, Juang, Koya, Kissan and Oraon in some Sevashrams and Residential Sevashrams functioning under the ST and SC Development Department.

(vi) Exemption of Tuition fee and the provision of N.T. Books.

In order to reduce the financial burden of ST parents, the government has resolved long back to provide elementary education free of cost by 100 percent. They are also provided with free N.T books and other study materials.

(vii) Pre-Matric Scholarship: –

Pre-matric Scholarship scheme for the ST students is an old and very popular scheme of the Union Government. This scholarship provides

to all the ST hostelier students from class I to class – IX whose parents are not income tax payers, at the rate of Rs.400/- per boy student and Rs. 425/- per girl student per month.

(viii) Admission in College / Universities and Post Matric Scholarship –

There is a provision of reservation of seats in college, universities and other state and national level educational institutions for the ST students and other than admission they get post-Matric scholarship. The post-Matric scholarship schemes for the ST students was, for the first time, introduced in 1948-49 for pursuing their higher education.

(ix) Book Bank facility –

The scheme of Book bank facility was introduced in the year of 1978-79 for the ST students pursuing costly courses relating to medical and engineering streams⁵.

In India the female literacy rate has increased from 15.34 percent in 1961 to 53.90 percent in 2001. In Odisha the female literacy has increased from a lower level, that is only from 8.65 percent in the former Census Year to 50.51 percent in the later one. Odisha has a low literacy rate. According to 2001 Census, overall literacy rate in the country is 65.08 percent. The literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes in Odisha is a cause for concern, as it has constantly been lower than that of total population. The literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes, which was 22.31 percent in 1991, increased to 37.37 percent in 2001. Male literacy has increased from 34.4 percent to 51.5 percent during 1991-2001. Female literacy continues to be an area of concern despite notable achievement. During last decade, ST female literacy is lower by approximately 27%

compared to overall female literacy of the general population.

Literacy Rate among Total Population and ST Population in India (1961-2001)

| Census years | Total Population | | | Total ST Population | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------|-------|--|------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--|--|
| | Male | Female | Total | Gender Gap/ Difference between male/female literacy | Gender Disparity Index | Male | Female | Total | Gender Gap/ Difference between male/female literacy | Difference between literacy rate female & ST Female |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 1961 | 40.40 | 15.34 | 28.31 | 25.06 | - | 13.04 | 2.89 | 7.99 | 10.15 | 12.45 |
| 1971 | 45.95 | 21.97 | 34.45 | 23.98 | - | 17.09 | 4.58 | 10.89 | 12.51 | 17.38 |
| 1981 | 56.37 | 29.75 | 43.56 | 26.62 | 0.352 | 24.52 | 8.04 | 16.35 | 16.48 | 21.71 |
| 1991 | 63.86 | 39.42 | 52.21 | 24.44 | 0.288 | 40.65 | 18.19 | 29.60 | 22.46 | 18.19 |
| 2001 | 75.26 | 53.90 | 64.84 | 21.36 | 0.216 | 59.17 | 34.76 | 47.10 | 24.41 | 19.14 |

Source – Census of India publications 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001

In case of low female literacy seven districts of Odisha have below 30% women literacy as revealed from the Census of India 2001. These districts are Kalahandi (29.56), Nuapada (26.01), Gajapati (28.91), Koraput (24.81), Rayagada (24.31), Nawarangpur (21.02) and Malkangiri.⁶ (21.28)

Literacy rate of General and ST population in different Decades –

| Year | Odisha | | | | | |
|------|--------|--------|-------|---------|--------|-------|
| | I | | | General | | |
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| 1971 | 16.38 | 2.58 | 9.46 | 38.30 | 13.92 | 26.18 |
| 1981 | 28.32 | 5.81 | 17.01 | 47.09 | 21.12 | 35.37 |
| 1991 | 34.44 | 10.21 | 22.31 | 63.01 | 37.07 | 49.09 |
| 2001 | 51.50 | 23.36 | 37.37 | 75.95 | 50.05 | 63.08 |

Source – Census of India

School dropout is one of the major social problems for tribal girl students in Odisha. Several factors have been found that are responsible for the dropout of ample pupils. They are –

- (i) Uninterested in studies
- (ii) Required for household works.
- (iii) Cost of schooling is too much

- (iv) Getting married in early age
- (v) School too far away
- (vi) Non-availability of proper school facilities for girls.
- (vii) Required for the Care of sibling.
- (viii) Non-availability of transport.

The Government of India has taken up a number of laudable efforts to bring the Scheduled Tribes educationally at par with the rest of the populace of the country. Various gender specific schemes and programmes have also been introduced at different phases of time for encouraging girls literacy⁷. In spite of these measures, there is little interest found among the tribal parents to pay proper attention for educating their girl children. Most of them are infested with blind beliefs, superstitions and orthodoxy. It requires to train and educate the parents and to create consciousness in them to send their girl children to schools and colleges. Besides, interest-creative moves and measures should be developed so that girls would be interested to go to schools.

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